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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Downtown Greensboro Historic District (Amended)
Guilford County, North Carolina

[Note: Only amended items and the required NPS certification are included below.]

1. **NAME OF PROPERTY:** Downtown Greensboro Historic District (Amended)
3. **STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION:** As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant locally.

Jeffrey Crow SHPO 5/26/04
Signature of certifying official/title Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION:** I hereby certify that the property is entered in the National Register. [See continuation sheet.]

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. **NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:**

Contributing: 96 buildings
Noncontributing: 15 buildings

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7. DESCRIPTION:

The Downtown Greensboro Historic District was listed in the National Register in June 1982. This amendment presents the case for extending the period of significance from 1930 to 1950.

The original nomination notes that the district encompasses the core of Greensboro's historic downtown commercial area with Elm Street forming the central focus. The district's oldest buildings, erected during the second half of the 1880s, are typically three-story brick structures designed in the Italianate-influenced commercial vernacular of the late nineteenth century. As the century came to a close, commercial buildings with greater architectural richness reflected a period of dramatic growth in the city. Hard-baked red face brick was frequently used, and simple galvanized iron cornices and granite sills and lintels commonly decorated the facades. At the turn of the century, the first buildings with real architectural pretensions were erected, and while basic Italianate elements remained constant, classical and Romanesque details were also introduced. The twentieth century brought contrasting trends in the commercial architecture of downtown Greensboro. The more ordinary speculative commercial structures became simpler in design, but architect-designed buildings became increasingly sophisticated.

In the 1920s, elaborate classicism continued, as exemplified by the Jefferson Standard Building, the Carolina Theatre, and the Southern Railway Passenger Depot #2. At the same time, toward the end of the decade, the modern Art Deco style became popular in downtown Greensboro, with the Kress and Woolworth buildings serving as key monuments in the style.

The Depression brought a significant, but temporary, slow-down in Greensboro's commerce, but recovery was under way by the mid-1930s. As a testament to the resilience of downtown, eight buildings were erected in the district during the decade, mostly after 1935. In addition, four buildings erected prior to 1930 were significantly remodeled during the 1930s. Interestingly, after the modern Art Deco buildings of the late 1920s, several of the buildings erected during the 1930s were strongly classical in design, such as the former Efid's Department Store at 230 South Elm Street (early 1930s) and the Shiffman Building at 225 South Elm Street (1936). The former Montgomery Ward Building at 232 South Elm Street (1936) combined classical detailing with modern proportions and plain, broad surfaces. The most spectacular building of the 1930s was the Belk Building, erected in 1939 at 101 South Elm Street. This large corner building was an excellent example of the streamlined Moderne style with its curved corner and horizontal bands of pre-cast concrete and glass-block windows. Sadly, its exterior was substantially remodeled in 1984 with an updated version of concrete and glass banding. Of the four buildings that were remodeled in the 1930s, the Isaacson Building at 306-308 South Elm Street

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is the most architecturally distinctive. This two-story, two-storefront building is faced with cast stone and features simple, but strong, Art Deco detailing across the upper facade above the second-floor windows.

Greensboro experienced another economic slump in the early 1940s, but by mid-decade and especially toward the end of the 1940s and extending through 1950, there was a renewed flurry of building activity in the district. Eight buildings were erected and an earlier building was substantially remodeled during these years. While three of those erected are simple, one-story brick (109-115 McGee Street, 1950) or concrete block (102-104 Barnhardt Street, 1947 and 122 Smothers Place, 1948) structures, and one (317 South Greene Street, 1946) is a simple two-story brick building, the remaining four are decidedly modern. The facade of the ca. 1944 Harry D. Kellet Building at 531 South Elm Street is sheathed with black carrera glass panels and has a rounded entranceway with double-leaf doors flanked by vertical strips of glass blocks. The two-story brick building at 316-318 South Greene Street, built in 1948, also makes use, on a smaller scale, of black carrera glass. In this case it surrounds long octagonal windows at the southeast corner of the building. The building's paired central entrances are flanked by curved walls of glass blocks. The spare, rectangular shape of the building and its metal, tilted-sash, second-floor windows also contribute to its modern feel. The Center Theatre, built in 1948 at 117-119 South Elm Street, achieves a Moderne appearance through its facade, which is composed of three pre-cast concrete vertical sections of three heights descending from north to south, each different in design. The decade culminated with the construction of the largest building in the district since the former Belk Building was erected in 1939. The cornerstone of the former Ellis Stone/Thalhimer's Department Store at 203 South Elm Street was laid in 1949, and the building opened in 1950. A good example of mid-twentieth-century modernism, it was designed by the New York architectural firm of Vorhees, Walker, Foley, and Smith. The large, two-story, brick building has clean, rectilinear lines created by the slightly projecting, flat cornice, the horizontal expanse of plain brickwork across the upper floor interrupted only by deeply inset vertical windows rising the entire height of the tall upper floor, and the flat canopy over the street-level glass storefront. Plain marble panels and brass detailing add to the modern refinement of the exterior of the building, while a sweeping circular stair with a brass handrail graces the interior.

After 1950, there was a noticeable decrease in construction in the district. No new buildings are known to have been erected during the 1950s and 1960s, and only four buildings during those decades are known to have been substantially remodeled. Only one building was constructed in the 1970s, but three were significantly remodeled. The 1980s saw the last significant new construction and remodeling in the district, when one large building was erected and four earlier buildings were remodeled.

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Building activity in the Downtown Greensboro Historic District between 1931 and 1950 was scattered throughout the district. Construction since 1950 has been confined to the 100 and 200 blocks of South Elm Street, and buildings that were significantly remodeled after 1950 are limited to the 100 and 200 blocks of South Elm Street and the 300 block of South Davie Street. Buildings demolished since 1980 are located primarily east of South Elm Street.

Inventory List

The expansion of the period of significance for the Downtown Greensboro Historic District from ca. 1885-1930 to ca. 1885-1950 calls for re-evaluation of the contributing or noncontributing status of buildings in the district. Buildings included in this inventory fall into one of the following categories:

- A. Buildings erected or substantially remodeled between 1931 and 1950 that were:
 1. Listed, inappropriately, as contributing buildings in the original inventory, but which now, with the expanded period of significance, are rightfully contributing
 2. Listed as noncontributing in the original inventory, but which are now contributing
 3. Listed, inappropriately, as contributing in the original inventory and which are now noncontributing
 4. Listed as noncontributing in the original inventory and which remain noncontributing
- B. Buildings erected prior to 1930 whose contributing or noncontributing status has changed since the nomination was prepared
- C. Buildings not recorded as separate structures in the original inventory
- D. Buildings originally included in an addendum to the inventory and on the district map but incompletely documented
- E. Buildings demolished since the original inventory was conducted in 1980
- F. Buildings erected since the original inventory was conducted in 1980
- G. Original inventory entries requiring miscellaneous revisions.

A building's category is identified at the end of the heading for each inventory entry.

The following comments apply to the inventory list as a whole:

- This inventory is intended to be used in conjunction with the original nomination inventory, with only significant changes or additional information noted herein. The absence of accompanying

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text indicates that the description and history in the original entry remain current.

- Buildings in the inventory are listed alphabetically by street and, under each street, numerically by address.
- Each listing includes the building's address, name, approximate dates of construction/remodeling, contributing or noncontributing status, and category (e.g. A.2.) as defined above, along with descriptive information as appropriate.
- Buildings addressed in the updated inventory are keyed by address to the district map.
- In the original inventory, in addition to properties being categorized as "C" for contributing and "N" for noncontributing, some properties were categorized as "P" for pivotal. Following today's National Register terminology, this inventory list will categorize buildings only as contributing or noncontributing.
- The on-site inspection conducted in the winter of 2003 revealed that some street numbers and street names have changed from what they were when the original inventory was conducted in 1980. Where this situation occurs for properties included in the updated inventory, the current address will be given with the previous address noted in parentheses, e.g. 226 (226-228) South Elm Street or 122 Smothers Place (Walker Avenue).

BARNHARDT STREET

102-104 - Jamison Building - 1947 - Contributing - A.2.

Sanborn maps show that this plain, one-story, concrete-block building, which has had a variety of uses, was erected between 1925 and 1950. According to the present owner, it was built in 1947, the third building on the site, the two earlier buildings having burned. A man named Jamison is believed to have been the original owner.

SOUTH DAVIE AVENUE

301-303 - Patterson Building - E.

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- 305-307 - American Commission Co. Warehouse - **E**.
311 - Taylor Building - **E**.
315-317 - Scott-Sparger Building - **E**.
319 - Guilford Marble and Tile Co. Building - **E**.
321 - Davis Building - **E**.
322 - Former Odell Hardware Company Warehouse #3 - ca. 1917/1980s - Noncontributing - **B**.
This visually striking building, which originally was defined by a series of round-arched windows, suffered a serious fire in the 1980s, during which the north wall collapsed. When the building subsequently was rehabilitated, the arch theme was retained, but was used as an open curtain wall, behind which the interior walls are recessed. A set-back rooftop floor has also been added.
323-325 - Newell Building - **E**.
327 - Petty-Reid Building - **E**.
329 - M. T. Pickard Building - **E**.

SOUTH ELM STREET

- 100 - First Citizens Bank - 1983 - Noncontributing - **F**.
Large, multi-story (4 or 5?), reflective glass and brick building whose main entrance is oriented toward the corner of South Elm and Market Streets. Replaced 118 and 120 South Elm Street.
101-109 - Belk Building - 1939/1984 - Noncontributing - **A.3**.
The Belk Building, an excellent example of the streamlined Moderne style with its curved corner and horizontal bands of pre-cast concrete and glass-block windows, was the most architecturally significant of the buildings erected in the district during the 1930s. It was substantially remodeled in 1984 with an updated version of concrete and glass banding.
113 - Building - ca. 1905/ca. 1950 - Contributing - **G**.
Sanborn maps show that this building was erected ca. 1905, not in 1939, as stated in the original inventory. Originally it was a five-story building with classical arches. All five floors remained until at least 1939, as shown in a documentary photograph. Later, perhaps due to a fire, the upper three floors were removed. However, the dramatic second-floor arches, which extend to either side in brick bands, remain intact.
117-119 - Center Theatre - 1948 - Contributing - **A.1**.

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118 - Lerner Building (See 100 South Elm Street.) - **E.**

120 - Former Prago-Guyes Building (See 100 South Elm Street.) - **E.**

201 - Building - ca. 1902/ca. 1985 - Noncontributing - **C.**

The nomination inventory treated this as part of the Ellis Stone/Thalhimer's Building (with an overall address given as 201-207 South Elm Street). However, the three-story building, which originally had a decorative round corner tower, was shown on the 1902 Sanborn map as being under construction at that time. It was still intact when the Ellis Stone Building was completed in 1950, but by 1979 the tower had been removed and the building had been remodeled. Around 1985, the building was again remodeled, and now has a severely plain, stuccoed facade.

203 (201-207) - Ellis Stone/Thalhimer's Building - 1949-1950 - Contributing - **A.2.**

Photographs taken soon after the building was erected show that today the exterior appears nearly identical to its original appearance. The only notable difference is that originally the tall, recessed, upper-floor windows had what appears to have been Roman shades; by 1979 these had been replaced with louvers on the upper halves of the windows; today the louvers have been removed and low, metal balcony railings have been installed flush to the front wall of the building. The Ellis Stone Department Store was the original occupant of the building, but in 1957 it was replaced by Thalhimer's Department Store, which remained in the building until the mid 1970s. The building is now used as the Elm Street Center, a venue for special events. This is the most significant building—in both size and symbol—erected in the district between 1931 and 1950 and was the last substantial building erected prior to the 1980s. The construction of a building of this size in 1949 signaled that commerce in downtown Greensboro was still going strong and that significant investments of this type were still considered justifiable.

206 - Building - ca. 1930/1940s/ca. 1970 - Noncontributing - **C.**

In the original inventory, this one-story building was treated as part of the Meyers Building at 200 South Elm Street. However, it appears to always have been a separate structure. Sanborn maps show that between 1925 and 1950 a three-story building on the site was replaced by a one-story building. A documentary photograph shows that originally it had a decorative facade with patterned brickwork, including "window" panels of herringbone-laid bricks. Photographs made ca. 1950 show that by that time the brick facade had been covered by a Moderne facade, plain in the center but accented by vertical elements on either side. By 1980, the present plain brick facade was in place.

213 - Former California Fruit Store - ca. 1920/1940s - Contributing - **A.2.**

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Although this tiny building is simple, its present appearance, with its large-glass-tile upper facade that was probably installed in the 1940s, is essentially the same as when it was photographed in July 1950.

214-216 - Mangel-Saslow Building - 1934/ca.1953/ca. 1970 - Noncontributing - A.4.

When erected, this two-story building had a unified upper facade with a plain wall surface and a band of four horizontal windows which appear to have had either tilt or roll-out sash. Around 1953, the south half was covered with carrara-glass tiles, and apparently not long thereafter, the north half was covered with the same tiles. Probably around 1970, the south half was again covered, this time with vertical-ribbed metal sheathing, so that what was once a unified building now has the appearance of two buildings that developed separately.

215 - National Hat Shop Building - ca. 1920/1940s/ca. 1970 - Noncontributing - A.4.

A 1950 photograph shows this building with a stylish Moderne facade that appears to have been composed of black carrara glass and neon banding and lettering. However, probably around 1970, the facade was totally remodeled and the upper portion was covered with vertical wood boards set in a sawtooth-like pattern.

217 - Building - ca. 1920/1940s - Contributing - A.2.

The large-glass-tile upper facade of this building suggests that, like 213 South Elm Street, its present appearance dates from the 1940s.

217 1/2 - Building - ca. 1919/ca. 1970 - Noncontributing - C.

This narrow, one-story building was treated as part of 217 South Elm Street in the original inventory. By 1919, the Sanborn maps show a harness shop at this location. The present stucco and glass appearance of the building probably dates from a ca. 1970 remodeling.

219 - Building - ca. 1885/ca. 1949/1950s or 1960s/post 1980 - Noncontributing - A.4.

Although the original inventory states that this building was built ca. 1885 and was remodeled ca. 1949, it actually has been remodeled several times. In the 1950s or 1960s it received a vertical metal facade, and it now has a stuccoed facade.

221 - Former Greensboro Hardware Co. Building - ca. 1908/1960s - Noncontributing - B.

The present metal grid facade appears to date from the 1960s.

223 (233) South Elm Street - Hendrix Building - ca. 1908/ca. 1980 - Noncontributing - B.

The original facade of brick and granite has been stuccoed, and the storefront has been remodeled on more than one occasion.

225 - Shiffman Building - 1936 - Contributing - A.1.

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227 - Building - ca. 1896 - Contributing - G.

Clarification: The original inventory entry was identified as both contributing and noncontributing. This building, #227, is, in fact, contributing. The noncontributing part must have referred to the small, adjacent, one-story building erected between 1925 and 1950 and now demolished. (Listed as 227 1/2 in the list of demolished buildings.)

227 1/2 - Building (Originally recorded as part of 227 South Elm Street, this small one-story building was erected between 1925 and 1950.) E.

230 - Former Efird's Department Store - early 1930s - Contributing - A. 2.

When recorded in 1980, the facade of this building had been sheathed with mid-twentieth-century ceramic tiles. Since then, the later facade was removed, revealing the largely intact first and second floors of what had originally been a three-story structure. It is not known exactly when the third story was lost, although a 1948 documentary photograph shows it still in place. The third story was a short story with six-over-six sash windows. All the other character-defining features, particularly the tall round-arched windows of the second story, remain intact. The building is distinguished by the use of Flemish-bond brickwork; the three tall, round-arched windows of the second floor with their Adamesque upper sash crowned by three-row brick arches with keystones; two stone roundels above and between the windows; and stone quoining that forms a border at either side of the facade.

232 (232-234) - Former Montgomery Ward Building - 1936 - Contributing - A.1.

306-308 - Isaacson Building - ca. 1900/1930s - Contributing - A.1.

315 (317) - American Cafe Building - ca. 1920 - Contributing - B.

It is unclear why this building was labeled noncontributing in the original inventory. It is, and was then, a well-preserved example of a ca. 1920 commercial building.

319-323 (323) - Rustin Building - 1937 - Contributing - A.2.

334 - Southern Export Building - E.

327 (329) - Former Odell Hardware Co. Showroom Building - ca. 1885 - Contributing-G.

This building was originally listed as a pivotal (contributing) building in the district, even though at the time it had a totally modern facade. Since then, however, the modern facade has been removed and the original facade has been restored, so that now the building actually is a contributing resource in the district. The three-story, eight-bay-wide, brick building has granite trim, round-arched third-floor windows, and a bracketed cornice.

343 - Tanenhaus Building #2 - ca. 1918 - Contributing - C.

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In the original inventory, this building was listed with 341 South Elm Street as a single structure. Their storefronts—nearly identical and characterized by broad segmental arches with shields emblazoned with the letter "T" for Tanenhaus—were in place by ca. 1930. Otherwise, the two buildings are shown in documentary photographs made since around 1930 as having differently designed facades. Sanborn maps show that 343 had been built by 1919, while 341 was built between 1919 and 1925. While 341 has a more Mediterranean feel with a pent tile roof and a decorative brickwork facade, 343 has had, at least since 1930, a plain brick facade with a band of windows above the storefront. The windows are now altered.

515 - Tucker-Erwin Building - ca. 1895/1930s-1940s - Contributing - **A.1.**

519 - Former Commercial Hotel - ca. 1903/ca. 1936/post 1980 - Noncontributing - **B.**

The little detailing that dated from the ca. 1936 remodeling after damage from a tornado has been hidden by stucco added since 1980.

523 (523-525) - Southside Hardware Building - ca. 1902/ca. 1936 - Contributing - **A.1.**

529 South Elm Street - B. W. Jerrell Building - ca. 1936 - Contributing - **A.2.**

531 South Elm Street - Harry D. Kellet Building - ca. 1944 - Contributing - **A.2.**

SOUTH GREENE STREET

301 - Greensboro Coffee Shop - **E.** (Demolished in 1988 to make way for addition to 113 West Washington Street) - **D.**

313 - Robertson Furniture Building - ca. 1920 - Contributing - **D.**

Three-story, painted-brick building with corbeled cornice, rectangular windows across facade with brick panels above each set of windows, segmental-arched windows along second and third floors of long north-side elevation, and added rectangular windows along first floor of north elevation. Served various furniture companies through at least the 1950s.

315 - Hepler Grocery - 1926 - Contributing - **D.**

Two-story brick building with corbeled cornice and paired rectangular windows on second floor. Crutchfield Plumbing occupied building in its first year; in 1927 it occupied only the second floor, while the Ernest C. Hepler Grocery took over the first floor.

316-318 - WCOG Radio Station Building - 1948 - Contributing - **D.**

Two-story, brick, clean-cut building with horizontal octagonal windows at southeast

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corner surrounded by black carrara glass, central entrances flanked by glass blocks, and metal-tilt second-floor windows with a small round window in the center of the facade. City directories reveal that the building was erected in 1948 and was first occupied by WCOG Radio Station (Greensboro's third), the Radio Grill Restaurant, and Southern Photo Print and Supply Company.

317 - Davidson Supply Company - 1946 - Noncontributing - D.

Two-story stuccoed-brick building. Although it retains its original modernized fluted pilasters on either side of the facade and triglyph frieze across the top, the building's otherwise utilitarian design was dressed up ca. 1990 with modified windows and numerous post-modern details on both the facade and the south elevation. The original and long-time owner-occupant was the Davidson Auto Supply Company, later simply the Davidson Supply Company.

MARTIN LUTHER KING STREET (formerly Ashboro Street)

125 - Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Depot - E.

McGEE STREET (formerly West Edwards Place)

109-115 - Building - 1950 - Contributing - D.

Plain one-story brick building with four storefronts, each with a central door with transom flanked by two show windows. Originally used as the Thrift Shop (women's clothing), Columbia Laundry, Stanley Finance Inc., and the SR TV Company (television sales and service).

117-123 - General Greene Hotel - ca. 1925 - Contributing - D.

Although this building currently is a three-story brick shell with second and third-floor windows removed and interior gutted (as if in the middle of a rehab that was aborted), the shell and its detailing are intact, based on a photograph made soon after the building was erected. The 1925 Sanborn map shows the building "from plans." The hotel was housed on the second and third floors, while the first floor, in addition to the hotel lobby, housed the Union Bus Station and the Terminal Lunch Restaurant. The hotel entrance appears intact, with a double-leaf door with sidelights and transom, a show window, a wood canopy hung by chains, and a transom. (The other storefronts are boarded up.) Surviving details from the upper two floors include all the window openings, granite and brick

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string courses, a one-bay ironwork balcony in the center of the second floor, two blind balustrade panels beneath the granite-coped cornice, and a pair of lunette upper windows near the front of each side elevation.

SMOTHERS PLACE (formerly Walker Avenue)

122 - Building - 1948 - Contributing - D.

Originally used as the Kirby vacuum cleaner sales and service business, this is a narrow but long one-story concrete block building with an entrance on the west side of the south facade, a show window on the east side of the facade, and a terra cotta tile cornice coping.

EAST WASHINGTON STREET

118-136 - Building - E.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE:

Summary

The Downtown Greensboro Historic District was listed in the National Register in June 1982. The nomination identified the district's period of significance as ca. 1885-1930, with ca. 1885 being the date of construction of the oldest buildings in the district and 1930 being the last year (based on when the nomination was prepared) in which the district was at least fifty years old. On-site investigation and documentary research conducted by the consultant in the winter of 2003 revealed the appropriateness of extending the district's period of significance. This amendment presents the case for ending the period of significance in 1950, because the decades between 1930 and 1950 demonstrate the continuation of significant commercial development in the district with numerous buildings reflecting that development.

By the mid-1930s, recovery from the Depression was under way, and during the decade eight commercial buildings were erected and four more were substantially remodeled in the district. During the 1940s, eight additional buildings were erected, and one was substantially remodeled, verifying the continued commercial vitality of Greensboro's business district. The decade culminated in the 1949-1950 construction in the heart of the district of the large, modern department store for Ellis Stone and Company. However, in 1949 another, conflicting, event occurred that had a significant impact on the future of downtown as a retail center. In that year, the Summit Shopping Center opened as the first suburban shopping center in Greensboro; it was followed by other neighborhood shopping centers. Consequently, in the decades after 1950, very few buildings were erected or remodeled in the district, rendering 1950 the appropriate end to the period of significance.

In addition to discussing the buildings erected or substantially remodeled between 1931 and 1950, the amendment's inventory list also includes buildings erected prior to 1930 whose contributing or noncontributing status has changed since the original nomination was prepared; buildings not recorded as separate structures in the original inventory; buildings originally included in an addendum to the inventory and on the district map but incompletely documented; buildings demolished since the original inventory was conducted in 1980; buildings erected since 1980; and original inventory entries requiring miscellaneous revisions.

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Historical Background and Context

Greensboro experienced a period of explosive growth in the 1920s accompanied by the construction of numerous buildings in the city's commercial center, many of which were architect-designed and exhibited the latest in architectural fashion. Although the Depression hindered Greensboro's retail trade during the early 1930s, recovery was well under way by mid-decade. The Downtown Greensboro Historic District strongly reflects this recovery, for during the 1930s, eight commercial buildings were erected—including the mammoth Belk Department Store at the southeast corner of South Elm and Market streets—and four buildings were substantially remodeled.

The 1940s were active years for Greensboro as a whole. Entry of the United States into World War II initially brought an economic slump to the city, but in 1942 Greensboro was selected as the site for an army training camp, the only one in America located entirely within a municipality. During a thirteen-month period, 87,000 men trained at the camp, and for more than a year thereafter, the camp served as the Overseas Replacement Depot for the Army Air Corps in the Eastern United States, processing 240,000 men and women during that period. The camp was a significant boost to Greensboro's economy.

Meanwhile, the city continued as a transportation hub. In 1940, thirty-nine Southern Railway passenger trains and twenty-nine freight trains ran through Greensboro daily. Union Bus Station saw sixty-one buses dispatched each weekday and on Sunday, ninety-two buses arrived or departed.

In 1946 the United States Post Office Department selected Greensboro as a mail hub, serving 5,331 post offices in five states between Washington and Atlanta. In 1947 Greensboro reached a new level of sophistication with the establishment of a planning and zoning commission. During the decade, several radio stations went on the air in Greensboro, one of which, WCOG, broadcast from a studio located at 316-318 South Greene Street beginning in 1948. In 1949, WFMY-TV transmitted a live image and voice to the approximately 2,000 television sets already in the Piedmont. Sales and service became an essential element of this new entertainment industry, and one such business, the SR TV Company, began operating at 115 McGee Street in 1950. During the 1940s, Greensboro's business district, with its large department and furniture stores, clothing stores, and specialty shops, was the retail center of the Piedmont.

Construction in the district during the 1940s included the erection of eight buildings and the substantial

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remodeling of one, verifying the continued commercial vitality of the place. The most significant of these buildings—both in size and symbol—was the large, modern department store built for Ellis Stone and Company in 1949-1950 and later occupied by Thalhimers Department Store for nearly two decades beginning in 1957. The construction of this building at the end of the 1940s made a strong statement about commerce in downtown Greensboro—that it was still going strong and that its role as a center for shopping was considered to have a bright future, thereby justifying such a large investment.

However, another event took place in 1949 that had a serious impact on downtown's future as a center for shopping. In that year, the Summit Shopping Center opened as the first suburban shopping center in Greensboro and only the second one in North Carolina. It was followed by other neighborhood shopping centers and, later, enclosed malls, and eventually these took their toll on downtown as the center of retail shopping. During the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, very few buildings were erected or remodeled in the district. Within a three year period in the 1970s, three South Elm Street department stores closed—Belk's in 1975, Thalhimers in 1976, and Meyer's in 1978—no longer able to struggle against the tide of suburban commercial development. The era of downtown as the center for shopping in Greensboro was over.

[The primary source used in this essay for information on the historical development of Greensboro after 1930 was: Gayle Hicks Fripp, *Greensboro: A Chosen Center* (Sun Valley, CA: American Historical Press, 2001), 99-137.]

11. FORM PREPARED BY:

name/title: Laura A. W. Phillips, Architectural Historian

organization: N/A

street & number: 637 N. Spring St.

city or town: Winston-Salem

state: North Carolina

zip code: 27101

telephone: 336/727-1968

date: April 2003

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PHOTOGRAPHS:

The following photographs depict representative properties cited in the inventory as reclassified from noncontributing or no-given-status to contributing as a result of this nomination amendment.

Name of Property: Downtown Greensboro Historic District
Location: Guilford County, North Carolina
Photographer: Laura A. W. Phillips
Date of Photographs: 2003
Negative Location: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.

- A. 230 South Elm Street, Former Efird's Department Store, view to west
- B. 203 South Elm Street, Ellis Stone/Thalhimer's Building, view to northeast
- C. 529 South Elm Street, B. W. Jerrell Building, view to east
- D. 316-318 South Greene Street, WCOG Radio Station Building, view to northwest
- E. 117-123 McGee Street, General Greene Hotel, view to southeast

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Downtown Greensboro Historic District (Amended)
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[Note: Only amended items and the required NPS certification are included below.]

1. **NAME OF PROPERTY:** Downtown Greensboro Historic District (Amended)
3. **STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION:** As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant locally.

Jeffrey Crow SHPO 5/26/04
Signature of certifying official/title Date

North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION:** I hereby certify that the property is entered in the National Register. [___ See continuation sheet.]

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. **NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:**

Contributing: 96 buildings
Noncontributing: 15 buildings

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Downtown Greensboro Historic District (Amended)
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7. DESCRIPTION:

The Downtown Greensboro Historic District was listed in the National Register in June 1982. This amendment presents the case for extending the period of significance from 1930 to 1950.

The original nomination notes that the district encompasses the core of Greensboro's historic downtown commercial area with Elm Street forming the central focus. The district's oldest buildings, erected during the second half of the 1880s, are typically three-story brick structures designed in the Italianate-influenced commercial vernacular of the late nineteenth century. As the century came to a close, commercial buildings with greater architectural richness reflected a period of dramatic growth in the city. Hard-baked red face brick was frequently used, and simple galvanized iron cornices and granite sills and lintels commonly decorated the facades. At the turn of the century, the first buildings with real architectural pretensions were erected, and while basic Italianate elements remained constant, classical and Romanesque details were also introduced. The twentieth century brought contrasting trends in the commercial architecture of downtown Greensboro. The more ordinary speculative commercial structures became simpler in design, but architect-designed buildings became increasingly sophisticated. In the 1920s, elaborate classicism continued, as exemplified by the Jefferson Standard Building, the Carolina Theatre, and the Southern Railway Passenger Depot #2. At the same time, toward the end of the decade, the modern Art Deco style became popular in downtown Greensboro, with the Kress and Woolworth buildings serving as key monuments in the style.

The Depression brought a significant, but temporary, slow-down in Greensboro's commerce, but recovery was under way by the mid-1930s. As a testament to the resilience of downtown, eight buildings were erected in the district during the decade, mostly after 1935. In addition, four buildings erected prior to 1930 were significantly remodeled during the 1930s. Interestingly, after the modern Art Deco buildings of the late 1920s, several of the buildings erected during the 1930s were strongly classical in design, such as the former Efir's Department Store at 230 South Elm Street (early 1930s) and the Shiffman Building at 225 South Elm Street (1936). The former Montgomery Ward Building at 232 South Elm Street (1936) combined classical detailing with modern proportions and plain, broad surfaces. The most spectacular building of the 1930s was the Belk Building, erected in 1939 at 101 South Elm Street. This large corner building was an excellent example of the streamlined Moderne style with its curved corner and horizontal bands of pre-cast concrete and glass-block windows. Sadly, its exterior was substantially remodeled in 1984 with an updated version of concrete and glass banding. Of the four buildings that were remodeled in the 1930s, the Isaacson Building at 306-308 South Elm Street

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is the most architecturally distinctive. This two-story, two-storefront building is faced with cast stone and features simple, but strong, Art Deco detailing across the upper facade above the second-floor windows.

Greensboro experienced another economic slump in the early 1940s, but by mid-decade and especially toward the end of the 1940s and extending through 1950, there was a renewed flurry of building activity in the district. Eight buildings were erected and an earlier building was substantially remodeled during these years. While three of those erected are simple, one-story brick (109-115 McGee Street, 1950) or concrete block (102-104 Barnhardt Street, 1947 and 122 Smothers Place, 1948) structures, and one (317 South Greene Street, 1946) is a simple two-story brick building, the remaining four are decidedly modern. The facade of the ca. 1944 Harry D. Kellet Building at 531 South Elm Street is sheathed with black carrera glass panels and has a rounded entranceway with double-leaf doors flanked by vertical strips of glass blocks. The two-story brick building at 316-318 South Greene Street, built in 1948, also makes use, on a smaller scale, of black carrera glass. In this case it surrounds long octagonal windows at the southeast corner of the building. The building's paired central entrances are flanked by curved walls of glass blocks. The spare, rectangular shape of the building and its metal, tilted-sash, second-floor windows also contribute to its modern feel. The Center Theatre, built in 1948 at 117-119 South Elm Street, achieves a Moderne appearance through its facade, which is composed of three pre-cast concrete vertical sections of three heights descending from north to south, each different in design. The decade culminated with the construction of the largest building in the district since the former Belk Building was erected in 1939. The cornerstone of the former Ellis Stone/Thalhimer's Department Store at 203 South Elm Street was laid in 1949, and the building opened in 1950. A good example of mid-twentieth-century modernism, it was designed by the New York architectural firm of Vorhees, Walker, Foley, and Smith. The large, two-story, brick building has clean, rectilinear lines created by the slightly projecting, flat cornice, the horizontal expanse of plain brickwork across the upper floor interrupted only by deeply inset vertical windows rising the entire height of the tall upper floor, and the flat canopy over the street-level glass storefront. Plain marble panels and brass detailing add to the modern refinement of the exterior of the building, while a sweeping circular stair with a brass handrail graces the interior.

After 1950, there was a noticeable decrease in construction in the district. No new buildings are known to have been erected during the 1950s and 1960s, and only four buildings during those decades are known to have been substantially remodeled. Only one building was constructed in the 1970s, but three were significantly remodeled. The 1980s saw the last significant new construction and remodeling in the district, when one large building was erected and four earlier buildings were remodeled.

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Section Number 7 Page 4 Downtown Greensboro Historic District (Amended)
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Building activity in the Downtown Greensboro Historic District between 1931 and 1950 was scattered throughout the district. Construction since 1950 has been confined to the 100 and 200 blocks of South Elm Street, and buildings that were significantly remodeled after 1950 are limited to the 100 and 200 blocks of South Elm Street and the 300 block of South Davie Street. Buildings demolished since 1980 are located primarily east of South Elm Street.

Inventory List

The expansion of the period of significance for the Downtown Greensboro Historic District from ca. 1885-1930 to ca. 1885-1950 calls for re-evaluation of the contributing or noncontributing status of buildings in the district. Buildings included in this inventory fall into one of the following categories:

- A. Buildings erected or substantially remodeled between 1931 and 1950 that were:
 1. Listed, inappropriately, as contributing buildings in the original inventory, but which now, with the expanded period of significance, are rightfully contributing
 2. Listed as noncontributing in the original inventory, but which are now contributing
 3. Listed, inappropriately, as contributing in the original inventory and which are now noncontributing
 4. Listed as noncontributing in the original inventory and which remain noncontributing
- B. Buildings erected prior to 1930 whose contributing or noncontributing status has changed since the nomination was prepared
- C. Buildings not recorded as separate structures in the original inventory
- D. Buildings originally included in an addendum to the inventory and on the district map but incompletely documented
- E. Buildings demolished since the original inventory was conducted in 1980
- F. Buildings erected since the original inventory was conducted in 1980
- G. Original inventory entries requiring miscellaneous revisions.

A building's category is identified at the end of the heading for each inventory entry.

The following comments apply to the inventory list as a whole:

- This inventory is intended to be used in conjunction with the original nomination inventory, with only significant changes or additional information noted herein. The absence of accompanying

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text indicates that the description and history in the original entry remain current.

- Buildings in the inventory are listed alphabetically by street and, under each street, numerically by address.
- Each listing includes the building's address, name, approximate dates of construction/remodeling, contributing or noncontributing status, and category (e.g. **A.2.**) as defined above, along with descriptive information as appropriate.
- Buildings addressed in the updated inventory are keyed by address to the district map.
- In the original inventory, in addition to properties being categorized as "C" for contributing and "N" for noncontributing, some properties were categorized as "P" for pivotal. Following today's National Register terminology, this inventory list will categorize buildings only as contributing or noncontributing.
- The on-site inspection conducted in the winter of 2003 revealed that some street numbers and street names have changed from what they were when the original inventory was conducted in 1980. Where this situation occurs for properties included in the updated inventory, the current address will be given with the previous address noted in parentheses, e.g. 226 (226-228) South Elm Street or 122 Smothers Place (Walker Avenue).

BARNHARDT STREET

102-104 - Jamison Building - 1947 - Contributing - **A.2.**

Sanborn maps show that this plain, one-story, concrete-block building, which has had a variety of uses, was erected between 1925 and 1950. According to the present owner, it was built in 1947, the third building on the site, the two earlier buildings having burned. A man named Jamison is believed to have been the original owner.

SOUTH DAVIE AVENUE

301-303 - Patterson Building - **E.**

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- 305-307 - American Commission Co. Warehouse - **E**.
311 - Taylor Building - **E**.
315-317 - Scott-Spiger Building - **E**.
319 - Guilford Marble and Tile Co. Building - **E**.
321 - Davis Building - **E**.
322 - Former Odell Hardware Company Warehouse #3 - ca. 1917/1980s - Noncontributing - **B**.
This visually striking building, which originally was defined by a series of round-arched windows, suffered a serious fire in the 1980s, during which the north wall collapsed. When the building subsequently was rehabilitated, the arch theme was retained, but was used as an open curtain wall, behind which the interior walls are recessed. A set-back rooftop floor has also been added.
323-325 - Newell Building - **E**.
327 - Petty-Reid Building - **E**.
329 - M. T. Pickard Building - **E**.

SOUTH ELM STREET

- 100 - First Citizens Bank - 1983 - Noncontributing - **F**.
Large, multi-story (4 or 5?), reflective glass and brick building whose main entrance is oriented toward the corner of South Elm and Market Streets. Replaced 118 and 120 South Elm Street.
101-109 - Belk Building - 1939/1984 - Noncontributing - **A.3**.
The Belk Building, an excellent example of the streamlined Moderne style with its curved corner and horizontal bands of pre-cast concrete and glass-block windows, was the most architecturally significant of the buildings erected in the district during the 1930s. It was substantially remodeled in 1984 with an updated version of concrete and glass banding.
113 - Building - ca. 1905/ca. 1950 - Contributing - **G**.
Sanborn maps show that this building was erected ca. 1905, not in 1939, as stated in the original inventory. Originally it was a five-story building with classical arches. All five floors remained until at least 1939, as shown in a documentary photograph. Later, perhaps due to a fire, the upper three floors were removed. However, the dramatic second-floor arches, which extend to either side in brick bands, remain intact.
117-119 - Center Theatre - 1948 - Contributing - **A.1**.

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118 - Lerner Building (See 100 South Elm Street.) - **E.**

120 - Former Prago-Guyes Building (See 100 South Elm Street.) - **E.**

201 - Building - ca. 1902/ca. 1985 - Noncontributing - **C.**

The nomination inventory treated this as part of the Ellis Stone/Thalhimer's Building (with an overall address given as 201-207 South Elm Street). However, the three-story building, which originally had a decorative round corner tower, was shown on the 1902 Sanborn map as being under construction at that time. It was still intact when the Ellis Stone Building was completed in 1950, but by 1979 the tower had been removed and the building had been remodeled. Around 1985, the building was again remodeled, and now has a severely plain, stuccoed facade.

203 (201-207) - Ellis Stone/Thalhimer's Building - 1949-1950 - Contributing - **A.2.**

Photographs taken soon after the building was erected show that today the exterior appears nearly identical to its original appearance. The only notable difference is that originally the tall, recessed, upper-floor windows had what appears to have been Roman shades; by 1979 these had been replaced with louvers on the upper halves of the windows; today the louvers have been removed and low, metal balcony railings have been installed flush to the front wall of the building. The Ellis Stone Department Store was the original occupant of the building, but in 1957 it was replaced by Thalhimer's Department Store, which remained in the building until the mid 1970s. The building is now used as the Elm Street Center, a venue for special events. This is the most significant building—in both size and symbol—erected in the district between 1931 and 1950 and was the last substantial building erected prior to the 1980s. The construction of a building of this size in 1949 signaled that commerce in downtown Greensboro was still going strong and that significant investments of this type were still considered justifiable.

206 - Building - ca. 1930/1940s/ca. 1970 - Noncontributing - **C.**

In the original inventory, this one-story building was treated as part of the Meyers Building at 200 South Elm Street. However, it appears to always have been a separate structure. Sanborn maps show that between 1925 and 1950 a three-story building on the site was replaced by a one-story building. A documentary photograph shows that originally it had a decorative facade with patterned brickwork, including "window" panels of herringbone-laid bricks. Photographs made ca. 1950 show that by that time the brick facade had been covered by a Moderne facade, plain in the center but accented by vertical elements on either side. By 1980, the present plain brick facade was in place.

213 - Former California Fruit Store - ca. 1920/1940s - Contributing - **A.2.**

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Although this tiny building is simple, its present appearance, with its large-glass-tile upper facade that was probably installed in the 1940s, is essentially the same as when it was photographed in July 1950.

214-216 - Mangel-Saslow Building - 1934/ca.1953/ca. 1970 - Noncontributing - A.4.

When erected, this two-story building had a unified upper facade with a plain wall surface and a band of four horizontal windows which appear to have had either tilt or roll-out sash. Around 1953, the south half was covered with carrara-glass tiles, and apparently not long thereafter, the north half was covered with the same tiles. Probably around 1970, the south half was again covered, this time with vertical-ribbed metal sheathing, so that what was once a unified building now has the appearance of two buildings that developed separately.

215 - National Hat Shop Building - ca. 1920/1940s/ca. 1970 - Noncontributing - A.4.

A 1950 photograph shows this building with a stylish Moderne facade that appears to have been composed of black carrara glass and neon banding and lettering. However, probably around 1970, the facade was totally remodeled and the upper portion was covered with vertical wood boards set in a sawtooth-like pattern.

217 - Building - ca. 1920/1940s - Contributing - A.2.

The large-glass-tile upper facade of this building suggests that, like 213 South Elm Street, its present appearance dates from the 1940s.

217 1/2 - Building - ca. 1919/ca. 1970 - Noncontributing - C.

This narrow, one-story building was treated as part of 217 South Elm Street in the original inventory. By 1919, the Sanborn maps show a harness shop at this location. The present stucco and glass appearance of the building probably dates from a ca. 1970 remodeling.

219 - Building - ca. 1885/ca. 1949/1950s or 1960s/post 1980 - Noncontributing - A.4.

Although the original inventory states that this building was built ca. 1885 and was remodeled ca. 1949, it actually has been remodeled several times. In the 1950s or 1960s it received a vertical metal facade, and it now has a stuccoed facade.

221 - Former Greensboro Hardware Co. Building - ca. 1908/1960s - Noncontributing - B.

The present metal grid facade appears to date from the 1960s.

223 (233) South Elm Street - Hendrix Building - ca. 1908/ca. 1980 - Noncontributing - B.

The original facade of brick and granite has been stuccoed, and the storefront has been remodeled on more than one occasion.

225 - Shiffman Building - 1936 - Contributing - A.1.

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227 - Building - ca. 1896 - Contributing - **G.**

Clarification: The original inventory entry was identified as both contributing and noncontributing. This building, #227, is, in fact, contributing. The noncontributing part must have referred to the small, adjacent, one-story building erected between 1925 and 1950 and now demolished. (Listed as 227 1/2 in the list of demolished buildings.)

227 1/2 - Building (Originally recorded as part of 227 South Elm Street, this small one-story building was erected between 1925 and 1950.) **E.**

230 - Former Efird's Department Store - early 1930s - Contributing - **A. 2.**

When recorded in 1980, the facade of this building had been sheathed with mid-twentieth-century ceramic tiles. Since then, the later facade was removed, revealing the largely intact first and second floors of what had originally been a three-story structure. It is not known exactly when the third story was lost, although a 1948 documentary photograph shows it still in place. The third story was a short story with six-over-six sash windows. All the other character-defining features, particularly the tall round-arched windows of the second story, remain intact. The building is distinguished by the use of Flemish-bond brickwork; the three tall, round-arched windows of the second floor with their Adamesque upper sash crowned by three-row brick arches with keystones; two stone roundels above and between the windows; and stone quoining that forms a border at either side of the facade.

232 (232-234) - Former Montgomery Ward Building - 1936 - Contributing - **A.1.**

306-308 - Isaacson Building - ca. 1900/1930s - Contributing - **A.1.**

315 (317) - American Cafe Building - ca. 1920 - Contributing - **B.**

It is unclear why this building was labeled noncontributing in the original inventory. It is, and was then, a well-preserved example of a ca. 1920 commercial building.

319-323 (323) - Rustin Building - 1937 - Contributing - **A.2.**

334 - Southern Export Building - **E.**

327 (329) - Former Odell Hardware Co. Showroom Building - ca. 1885 - Contributing - **G.**

This building was originally listed as a pivotal (contributing) building in the district, even though at the time it had a totally modern facade. Since then, however, the modern facade has been removed and the original facade has been restored, so that now the building actually is a contributing resource in the district. The three-story, eight-bay-wide, brick building has granite trim, round-arched third-floor windows, and a bracketed cornice.

343 - Tanenhaus Building #2 - ca. 1918 - Contributing - **C.**

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In the original inventory, this building was listed with 341 South Elm Street as a single structure. Their storefronts—nearly identical and characterized by broad segmental arches with shields emblazoned with the letter "T" for Tanenhaus—were in place by ca. 1930. Otherwise, the two buildings are shown in documentary photographs made since around 1930 as having differently designed facades. Sanborn maps show that 343 had been built by 1919, while 341 was built between 1919 and 1925. While 341 has a more Mediterranean feel with a pent tile roof and a decorative brickwork facade, 343 has had, at least since 1930, a plain brick facade with a band of windows above the storefront. The windows are now altered.

515 - Tucker-Erwin Building - ca. 1895/1930s-1940s - Contributing - **A.1.**

519 - Former Commercial Hotel - ca. 1903/ca. 1936/post 1980 - Noncontributing - **B.**

The little detailing that dated from the ca. 1936 remodeling after damage from a tornado has been hidden by stucco added since 1980.

523 (523-525) - Southside Hardware Building - ca. 1902/ca. 1936 - Contributing - **A.1.**

529 South Elm Street - B. W. Jerrell Building - ca. 1936 - Contributing - **A.2.**

531 South Elm Street - Harry D. Kellet Building - ca. 1944 - Contributing - **A.2.**

SOUTH GREENE STREET

301 - Greensboro Coffee Shop - **E.** (Demolished in 1988 to make way for addition to 113 West Washington Street) - **D.**

313 - Robertson Furniture Building - ca. 1920 - Contributing - **D.**

Three-story, painted-brick building with corbeled cornice, rectangular windows across facade with brick panels above each set of windows, segmental-arched windows along second and third floors of long north-side elevation, and added rectangular windows along first floor of north elevation. Served various furniture companies through at least the 1950s.

315 - Hepler Grocery - 1926 - Contributing - **D.**

Two-story brick building with corbeled cornice and paired rectangular windows on second floor. Crutchfield Plumbing occupied building in its first year; in 1927 it occupied only the second floor, while the Ernest C. Hepler Grocery took over the first floor.

316-318 - WCOG Radio Station Building - 1948 - Contributing - **D.**

Two-story, brick, clean-cut building with horizontal octagonal windows at southeast

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corner surrounded by black carrara glass, central entrances flanked by glass blocks, and metal-tilt second-floor windows with a small round window in the center of the facade. City directories reveal that the building was erected in 1948 and was first occupied by WCOG Radio Station (Greensboro's third), the Radio Grill Restaurant, and Southern Photo Print and Supply Company.

317 - Davidson Supply Company - 1946 - Noncontributing - D.

Two-story stuccoed-brick building. Although it retains its original modernized fluted pilasters on either side of the facade and triglyph frieze across the top, the building's otherwise utilitarian design was dressed up ca. 1990 with modified windows and numerous post-modern details on both the facade and the south elevation. The original and long-time owner-occupant was the Davidson Auto Supply Company, later simply the Davidson Supply Company.

MARTIN LUTHER KING STREET (formerly Ashboro Street)

125 - Cape Fear and Yadkin Valley Depot - E.

McGEE STREET (formerly West Edwards Place)

109-115 - Building - 1950 - Contributing - D.

Plain one-story brick building with four storefronts, each with a central door with transom flanked by two show windows. Originally used as the Thrift Shop (women's clothing), Columbia Laundry, Stanley Finance Inc., and the SR TV Company (television sales and service).

117-123 - General Greene Hotel - ca. 1925 - Contributing - D.

Although this building currently is a three-story brick shell with second and third-floor windows removed and interior gutted (as if in the middle of a rehab that was aborted), the shell and its detailing are intact, based on a photograph made soon after the building was erected. The 1925 Sanborn map shows the building "from plans." The hotel was housed on the second and third floors, while the first floor, in addition to the hotel lobby, housed the Union Bus Station and the Terminal Lunch Restaurant. The hotel entrance appears intact, with a double-leaf door with sidelights and transom, a show window, a wood canopy hung by chains, and a transom. (The other storefronts are boarded up.) Surviving details from the upper two floors include all the window openings, granite and brick

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string courses, a one-bay ironwork balcony in the center of the second floor, two blind balustrade panels beneath the granite-coped cornice, and a pair of lunette upper windows near the front of each side elevation.

SMOTHERS PLACE (formerly Walker Avenue)

122 - Building - 1948 - Contributing - **D.**

Originally used as the Kirby vacuum cleaner sales and service business, this is a narrow but long one-story concrete block building with an entrance on the west side of the south facade, a show window on the east side of the facade, and a terra cotta tile cornice coping.

EAST WASHINGTON STREET

118-136 - Building - **E.**

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8. SIGNIFICANCE:

Summary

The Downtown Greensboro Historic District was listed in the National Register in June 1982. The nomination identified the district's period of significance as ca. 1885-1930, with ca. 1885 being the date of construction of the oldest buildings in the district and 1930 being the last year (based on when the nomination was prepared) in which the district was at least fifty years old. On-site investigation and documentary research conducted by the consultant in the winter of 2003 revealed the appropriateness of extending the district's period of significance. This amendment presents the case for ending the period of significance in 1950, because the decades between 1930 and 1950 demonstrate the continuation of significant commercial development in the district with numerous buildings reflecting that development.

By the mid-1930s, recovery from the Depression was under way, and during the decade eight commercial buildings were erected and four more were substantially remodeled in the district. During the 1940s, eight additional buildings were erected, and one was substantially remodeled, verifying the continued commercial vitality of Greensboro's business district. The decade culminated in the 1949-1950 construction in the heart of the district of the large, modern department store for Ellis Stone and Company. However, in 1949 another, conflicting, event occurred that had a significant impact on the future of downtown as a retail center. In that year, the Summit Shopping Center opened as the first suburban shopping center in Greensboro; it was followed by other neighborhood shopping centers. Consequently, in the decades after 1950, very few buildings were erected or remodeled in the district, rendering 1950 the appropriate end to the period of significance.

In addition to discussing the buildings erected or substantially remodeled between 1931 and 1950, the amendment's inventory list also includes buildings erected prior to 1930 whose contributing or noncontributing status has changed since the original nomination was prepared; buildings not recorded as separate structures in the original inventory; buildings originally included in an addendum to the inventory and on the district map but incompletely documented; buildings demolished since the original inventory was conducted in 1980; buildings erected since 1980; and original inventory entries requiring miscellaneous revisions.

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Historical Background and Context

Greensboro experienced a period of explosive growth in the 1920s accompanied by the construction of numerous buildings in the city's commercial center, many of which were architect-designed and exhibited the latest in architectural fashion. Although the Depression hindered Greensboro's retail trade during the early 1930s, recovery was well under way by mid-decade. The Downtown Greensboro Historic District strongly reflects this recovery, for during the 1930s, eight commercial buildings were erected—including the mammoth Belk Department Store at the southeast corner of South Elm and Market streets—and four buildings were substantially remodeled.

The 1940s were active years for Greensboro as a whole. Entry of the United States into World War II initially brought an economic slump to the city, but in 1942 Greensboro was selected as the site for an army training camp, the only one in America located entirely within a municipality. During a thirteen-month period, 87,000 men trained at the camp, and for more than a year thereafter, the camp served as the Overseas Replacement Depot for the Army Air Corps in the Eastern United States, processing 240,000 men and women during that period. The camp was a significant boost to Greensboro's economy.

Meanwhile, the city continued as a transportation hub. In 1940, thirty-nine Southern Railway passenger trains and twenty-nine freight trains ran through Greensboro daily. Union Bus Station saw sixty-one buses dispatched each weekday and on Sunday, ninety-two buses arrived or departed.

In 1946 the United States Post Office Department selected Greensboro as a mail hub, serving 5,331 post offices in five states between Washington and Atlanta. In 1947 Greensboro reached a new level of sophistication with the establishment of a planning and zoning commission. During the decade, several radio stations went on the air in Greensboro, one of which, WCOG, broadcast from a studio located at 316-318 South Greene Street beginning in 1948. In 1949, WFMY-TV transmitted a live image and voice to the approximately 2,000 television sets already in the Piedmont. Sales and service became an essential element of this new entertainment industry, and one such business, the SR TV Company, began operating at 115 McGee Street in 1950. During the 1940s, Greensboro's business district, with its large department and furniture stores, clothing stores, and specialty shops, was the retail center of the Piedmont.

Construction in the district during the 1940s included the erection of eight buildings and the substantial

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Downtown Greensboro Historic District (Amended)
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remodeling of one, verifying the continued commercial vitality of the place. The most significant of these buildings—both in size and symbol—was the large, modern department store built for Ellis Stone and Company in 1949-1950 and later occupied by Thalhimer's Department Store for nearly two decades beginning in 1957. The construction of this building at the end of the 1940s made a strong statement about commerce in downtown Greensboro—that it was still going strong and that its role as a center for shopping was considered to have a bright future, thereby justifying such a large investment.

However, another event took place in 1949 that had a serious impact on downtown's future as a center for shopping. In that year, the Summit Shopping Center opened as the first suburban shopping center in Greensboro and only the second one in North Carolina. It was followed by other neighborhood shopping centers and, later, enclosed malls, and eventually these took their toll on downtown as the center of retail shopping. During the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, very few buildings were erected or remodeled in the district. Within a three year period in the 1970s, three South Elm Street department stores closed—Belk's in 1975, Thalhimer's in 1976, and Meyer's in 1978—no longer able to struggle against the tide of suburban commercial development. The era of downtown as the center for shopping in Greensboro was over.

[The primary source used in this essay for information on the historical development of Greensboro after 1930 was: Gayle Hicks Fripp, *Greensboro: A Chosen Center* (Sun Valley, CA: American Historical Press, 2001), 99-137.]

11. FORM PREPARED BY:

name/title: Laura A. W. Phillips, Architectural Historian

organization: N/A

street & number: 637 N. Spring St.

city or town: Winston-Salem

state: North Carolina

zip code: 27101

telephone: 336/727-1968

date: April 2003

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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PHOTOGRAPHS:

The following photographs depict representative properties cited in the inventory as reclassified from noncontributing or no-given-status to contributing as a result of this nomination amendment.

Name of Property: Downtown Greensboro Historic District
Location: Guilford County, North Carolina
Photographer: Laura A. W. Phillips
Date of Photographs: 2003
Negative Location: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.

- A. 230 South Elm Street, Former Efird's Department Store, view to west
- B. 203 South Elm Street, Ellis Stone/Thalhimer's Building, view to northeast
- C. 529 South Elm Street, B. W. Jerrell Building, view to east
- D. 316-318 South Greene Street, WCOG Radio Station Building, view to northwest
- E. 117-123 McGee Street, General Greene Hotel, view to southeast



